

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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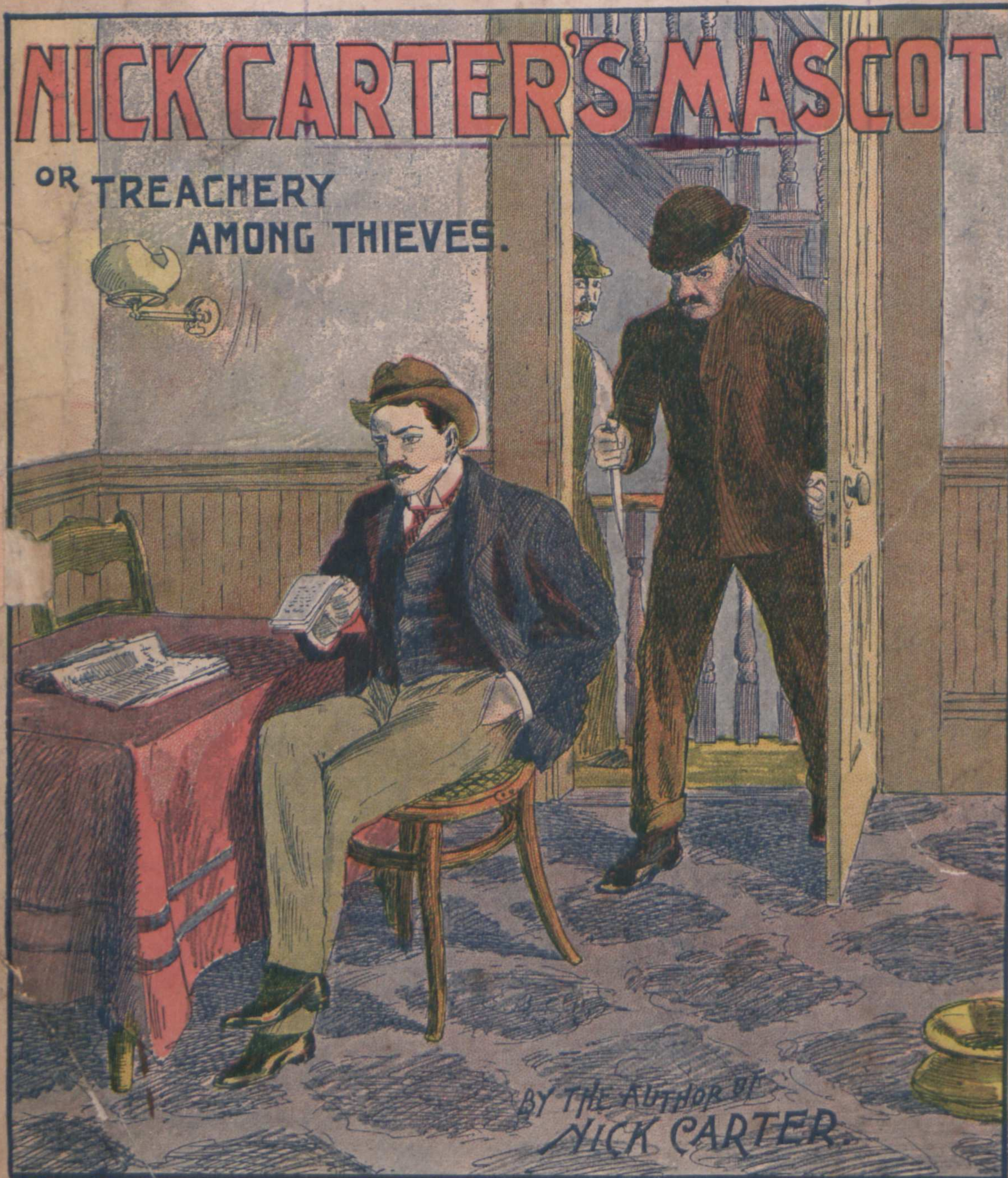
No. 129.

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NICK CARTER'S MASOCOT

OR TREACHERY
AMONG THIEVES.



BY THE AUTHOR OF
NICK CARTER

THE DOOR SOFTLY OPENED, AND THE MAN, WITH A WICKED-LOOKING KNIFE IN HIS HAND, CREPT CAUTIOUSLY INTO THE ROOM.

FOUR NEW NUMBERS 1ST OF EVERY MONTH

NICK CARTAR WEEKLY

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Nick Carter's Mascot

OR,

Treachery Among Thieves

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

A CHARMING WOMAN'S SCHEME.

"Doctor, my son is going insane!"

The speaker was a woman about forty years of age, with a handsome, expressive face, and sharp, steel-blue eyes.

She was richly dressed, and had every appearance of being a person of wealth and refinement.

As she spoke Doctor Speed, the famous specialist on insanity, crossed the floor of his luxuriously furnished private office and stood by her side, gazing keenly into her agitated face.

"Calm yourself," he said, kindly, "and tell me something about the case. It may not be as bad as you imagine."

The doctor concluded by handing the woman a chair and taking his place by her side.

"I can't speak of it calmly," said the

woman in a moment. "He is my only child."

"What form does his insanity take?" asked the specialist.

"Diamonds."

"The acquisition of diamonds?" asked the doctor.

"No; he imagines a large number of very valuable stones have been stolen from him."

"Has he any foundation for such a fancy?"

"Not the slightest."

"Is he perfectly rational on every other subject?"

"Yes."

"The case is not an unusual one," said the specialist, after a moment's thought, "and may not be a difficult one to handle."

"When can you see him?" asked the woman.

The doctor consulted his engagement book.

"Bring him here to-morrow at twelve o'clock," he said.

"But how shall I get him here?" asked the woman. "He is very sensitive on the subject."

"That I must leave to you," replied the doctor. "Perhaps any trivial excuse will answer."

"Will it be necessary for me to remain in the room during the examination?" asked the woman.

"Certainly not," was the reply. "I can handle such cases much better alone."

A look of relief passed over the woman's face.

"I am glad of that," she said. "I can't bear to think of what may be the miserable future of my child."

After some further talk the woman placed a liberal sum of money in the doctor's hand and left the office.

As she crossed the pavement and entered the carriage which stood there in waiting, a plainly-dressed man who was approaching the spot from the direction of Broadway, sprang toward the vehicle as if to prevent the driver from starting away.

He was too late, however, and the carriage was soon lost in a crush of vehicles farther down the street.

But the plainly dressed man was one of the most ambitious and alert of New York city's detective force, and he followed on after the carriage as rapidly as possible.

"Diamond Mag," he muttered, as he hastened along. "Her presence in the city will be news to the department. A few weeks ago we heard of her in Paris. What devil's game is she playing here?"

The chase, however, was a hopeless one, and Peter Martin, who rarely failed in such an undertaking, was obliged to turn back.

"It's a thousand dollars in my pocket

if I get her," he thought, "and I'll hustle about a bit before reporting the matter to the chief."

The detective hastened back to the place where the woman had taken the carriage, and made a careful inspection of the stores for some distance up and down the street, asking many questions of the clerks.

"She's up to some scheme," he thought, "and I must know what it is in order to follow her successfully."

So far as he could learn, she had not been in any of the stores.

Then he made inquiries at the various offices in the buildings convenient to the spot where the carriage had stood.

No one recognized the description he gave of the famous diamond thief. He did not, of course, tell who the woman was.

To one office, however, he failed to gain admittance.

This was the office of Doctor Speed, the celebrated specialist on insanity.

The doctor had closed his place of business for the day.

"She would not be apt to go there," he thought. "I must continue the search in another direction."

Having exhausted all immediate clues, the detective should have at once reported the matter to the inspector, but he was determined to gain a little glory and win the large reward offered for the apprehension of the woman without consulting his superiors.

What the detective's ambition led to will be shown in the course of the story.

As he turned away from the doctor's stairway he saw a well-known sporting character standing but a few feet away.

The fellow looked unusually shabby and dejected, and the officer approached him with a smile on his face.

"Hello, Con," he said. "Things don't seem to be coming your way lately. What's the matter?"

"I'm skatin' on me uppers," replied Con, with a scowl.

"What's the trouble?"

"I'll let you in wid de scheme," was the reply, "but dere don't no pinch go, eh?"

"Of course not."

"All right," said the tough. "'Bout a week ago I hooks up wid a gilly from Baltimore. He had a sack, an' braces me fer a game. See?"

"I see."

"Well, I'm pretty flip wid de pasteboards meself, but I didn't want ter queer de mark, fer I sees dere was a tapioca in sight. Catch on, pardner?"

"Yes."

The detective was becoming greatly amused.

"So I touches de wire to a chum o' mine in Jersey. He's a dead smooth duck—a foxy bloke wid a crockery glim."

"Had a glass eye, eh?"

"Course. Dat's wot I said. I tells him to come over an' help me peel de pelt off a jasper from de Sout'. See?"

"Go on."

"We sits in de game an' pulls his leg fer four hundred. Den he trots out de basalt blocks, an' I skins him fer a hundred an' de bones. Den I makes a killin' of eighty plunks on Hogan's alley, an' de mark ducks his nut. See?"

"That don't look like hard luck," suggested the detective.

"You wait," said Con. "De mark didn't let on he was sore or nothin', an' I went out paintin' de town. So he sends me a letter tellin' me I could make a winnin' in Boston. I t'inks t'ings is comin' me way, an' lines me clo's wid velvet an' goes to Boston."

"Nice place, that Boston," laughed the detective.

The tough scowled.

"De mark meets me at de boat," he continued, "t'rows a few geezers inter

me, steers me ag'in a brace game, an' I sinks me wad. See?"

"Yes."

"Den de mark puts de gang on an' gives me de horse laugh, low down, an' I've been shakin' on me uppers ever since. Had to soak me spark to git home."

"You'll soon have another diamond," said Martin.

"Bet yer feet I'll play even," was the reply.

"Did you see the carriage that stood there a few moments ago?" asked the detective, who had used the sport as a spy among people of his class on various occasions.

"Course I did," was the reply. "I was waitin' to panhandle de driver fer a dollar wot he owes me."

"Did you get it?" asked the detective, thinking he had found a clew at last.

"Naw. He went away too sudden."

"Do you know him?"

"Yas; he's de mug wot tried ter take de bangs off de queen at Mickey's faro bank de other night—de game sport."

"I'll give you ten if you'll find him for me to-night."

A look of pleased surprise crept into the bloated face of the tough. He glanced sharply around for an instant, and then replied that he was the man that could do the job.

The detective did not see that two tough-looking fellows were standing but a short distance away, watching every movement he made.

Nor was he aware that the fellows had kept him in sight every moment he was following the carriage.

When Con turned around one of them angrily made a signal for him to get to some place where they could talk together.

Martin was so intent on following the clew which he believed would lead to the

capture of the woman, that he did not see what was going on.

In a moment the tough with whom he was talking asked for the price of a few drinks and, receiving a dollar, passed down the street toward a saloon, followed by the two men.

It had been arranged that the detective should meet Con on the next corner in a few moments.

"Wot you doin' wid de fly copper?" demanded one of the followers, as soon as the three met in front of the bar.

Con flipped the dollar into the air and caught it as it descended.

"Workin' fer a few geezers," he said.

"Wot did he want ter know?"

Con glanced up suspiciously.

"See here," he said. "Wot you been doin'?"

"Nothin'."

"Den wot you leary of de copper fer?"

"We're keepin' cases on him."

"Oh!"

"Wot did he want?" repeated the fellow.

"Wanted ter know about dat rig de woman went away in."

"He did?"

The tough looked decidedly ugly.

"Dat's wot I said."

"An' you told him all about it?"

"Naw. I didn't know nothin' about it."

Con saw he was likely to get into trouble with the two toughs, and so lied out of it.

"Well," said one of the fellows, known to the police as Cracker Bob, "you make yerself scarce. Go out de back way an' skip de copper. You'll git thumped if we see you wid him agin."

Con thought a moment and decided to comply with the request. He could not afford to get into trouble with the thieves of the city for one ten-dollar bill.

He went out of the rear door, and the

two men sat down at a table and talked long and earnestly together.

"If de copper reports seein' Mag in de city," said Cracker Bob, "it's all up wid de scheme, 'cause de papers will get onto it, an' de men wot sell sparks will be mighty careful."

"How do you know he recognized Mag?" demanded the other, a noted bank robber, known as Slippery Jim.

"Wot would he be askin' about de rig fer if he wasn't on?" demanded Cracker Bob.

"I guess you're right," was the reply. "We must do fer him or give up the scheme. Even if we got the diamonds, every copper in the city would know Mag was in with the deal if they knew she was in de country."

"I wonder how she came out wid de doctor?" asked Bob.

"I guess it's all right," was the reply. "All she had to do was to make a date."

"Then, if we git rid of this copper, we'll have our hands on fifty thousand dollars' worth of sparks by to-morrow at this time," said Bob.

The two deperadoes whispered together for some moments, and then proceeded toward the spot where the detective stood, still waiting for Con.

The officer recognized the men at once, having had a hand in sending them over the road a few years before.

"See here," said Bob, approaching, "we've been dead tough, an' you're onto us, but we're playin' square now. You want ter know where that rig went?"

The detective was by no means deceived by the protestations of the two crooks, but he was anxious to learn all he could about the woman, and decided to see what he could make of the fellows.

"Yes," he replied, "I'd like to know where that driver went."

"Want him?" asked Cracker Bob, with a significant wink.

"Yes."

Martin thought this the easiest way to explain his interest in the matter.

"Well," said Bob, "we're both broke, an' if you'll produce, we'll put you on."

Martin knew the fellows he was dealing with, and yet, in his eagerness to grasp the prize for which he was working, he listened to them.

"Very well," he replied. "Show me where to find him, and I'll pay you well."

After a short wrangle over the amount to be received, the two crooks led the way to a small saloon not far from the corner of the Bowery and Grand street.

Like a good many other saloons in that part of the city, the place into which the detective followed the men had several very mysterious-looking rear rooms.

Martin recognized the place as a resort for a desperate "Peter" gang, but he reasoned that he could not expect to catch thieves unless he went where thieves hung out, and so passed into one of the back rooms without question.

Bob and Jim left him sitting alone for a few moments while they consulted together in an adjoining room.

"What shall we do with him?" demanded the former.

Jim drew his hand significantly across his throat.

"He sent us over de road once," he said, "an' now we can make a play for even. Dat's why I brought him here."

"It ain't safe," said Bob.

"Wot then? You're mighty tender of the bloke wot give yer t'ree years."

"Chuck him in a hole until we gits out of de country."

"Rats! He'll git out an' do us again!"

"If anything happens," was the rejoinder, "it's easier pleadin' to runnin' him off than to cuttin' his throat."

"But it's a sure thing we git the sparks, an' den we git out of de country. I'd like to make this one play fer even."

But Bob would not hear to murder be-

ing committed, and the two plotters soon joined the detective, Jim anything but pleased.

"Where's the driver?" demanded Martin, as the two men entered the room where he sat.

"What do you want of him?" demanded Jim.

"I want to talk with him."

"Yer lie! Yer wants to pinch him."

It was Bob who spoke.

Martin, regretting that he had not notified some officer of his destination, sprang to his feet and reached for his revolver.

"Is this a trap?" he said, making for the door.

The next moment both men sprang upon him.

There was a short struggle, and then the detective fell to the floor, the blood spurting from a wound in his head.

"Now," said Jim, "we'll lay him away until we git the sparks."

"Bet yer life," said Bob. "That's a sharp scheme of Mag's."

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE SCHEME WORKED.

After dodging about the streets for some time in order to elude the detective, the driver of the vehicle containing the woman drew up in a quiet square, and descending from his seat, opened the door of the vehicle.

"Did you see him?" he asked, shortly.

"See him? What do you mean?"

"A fly copper followed us from the doctor's office," was the reply. "That's why I jumped around so."

"Did you get away from him?"

The woman asked the question anxiously.

"Of course I did. I ain't hankerin' after another term up the river."

"Do you think he recognized me?"

"I don't know. He may have wanted me."

"I guess you are the one he wants," was the reply. "You know I am supposed to be in Paris."

"Well, we're clear of him now, and when Bob an' Jim report we shall know what he is up to."

"Did they see him?" asked the woman.

"Yes. They followed him while he chased us, and went back with him when he gave up the chase."

"I hope they'll cut his throat," said the woman, savagely. "It will spoil everything if he reports that I am in the city."

"Where now?" asked the driver, who was simply a confederate of the woman, disguised as a coachman.

"To the diamond store," was the reply.

In a short time the carriage drew up in front of a splendid establishment on Broadway.

The woman alighted and entered the place.

"I am Mrs. Doctor Speed," she said to the clerk, who stepped forward to receive her order, "and desire to order a quantity of diamonds."

The doctor, who had recently been married, was well known in the store, and the woman received the most perfect attention.

She was shown many gems, and from them selected fully fifty thousand dollars' worth.

"Now," she said, laying them aside, "I don't know whether the doctor will like what I have chosen."

"You have used excellent taste," said the clerk, bowing.

"That may be true," replied the woman, with a smile, "but I want the doctor to see them before they are sent home."

"When can he come?" asked the clerk.

"That's the trouble," was the reply.

"He is so busy that he can't come, or, at least, he thinks he is."

The clerk stepped back to the desk and consulted the manager.

"We might send them up to his office by special messenger," he said, returning to his customer.

"Just the thing," was the reply.

"When can you send them?"

"At any time."

"Then send them at twelve o'clock to-morrow," said the woman. "We can then look them over together."

This arrangement appeared to be satisfactory, and the woman left the store.

"It is all right," she said to the seeming coachman, as she stepped into the carriage.

The driver seemed to know exactly what to do, for, after driving about town for some time, he drew up at the rear entrance to a house of decidedly shady reputation, where the woman alighted.

"Now, Mose," she said, to the seeming coachman, "you put up the horses and go to the downtown resort. I am anxious to know what Bob and Jim are up to. When you find out, come back and let me know."

Mose grinned and started away.

About midnight he returned and sought a private interview with the woman.

"It is all right," he said. "Bob and Jim got the fly copper into one of the places downtown and put him to sleep with a club. He will lay still until we get out of the country with the diamonds."

"Where is he?"

"In one of the basements down on the Bowery."

"Where are Bob and Jim?"

"At the old place."

The woman hesitated a moment.

"They expect to go away with us," said Mose.

"I have been thinking about that," replied the woman.

"Well?"

"It will never do."

"Just what I think," said Mose. "Give them a spark apiece an' jump 'em."

"We might give them a very small diamond apiece," said the woman.

Mose laughed heartily.

"I thought that would be it," he said.

"They have done nothing in the case," said Mag, "except to follow the detective and quiet him. Why should they have an equal share of the diamonds?"

"We'll have to play it mighty sharp if we get away without them," said Mose. "They are tough people."

"We'll find a way," was the reply, "after we get the diamonds."

The next day at eleven-fifty Mag was again at the office of the doctor.

As she expected, she found many people there waiting their turn to see the famous specialist.

Taking off her bonnet, she hung it in the waiting-room, and took a position by the window.

At twelve sharp a cab drove up to the door.

A young man with a satchel in his hand sprang out and hurried up the steps.

The woman rose and opened the door before he had time to ring.

"Are you from the jeweler's?" she asked.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Then come in. The doctor is very busy, but if you have the diamonds I can take them to him by the back way. Then you will have but a short time to wait."

From where the messenger stood he could see the doctor at work in his private office, so he had no reason to suspect that anything was wrong.

He handed the satchel and its valuable contents to the seeming wife of the specialist, and stepped into the waiting-room.

As he did so, the woman quietly left

the room by a side door, leaving her bonnet hanging where she had placed it on entering.

The messenger, of course, believed she had gone to the doctor's room by another way.

In the hall the woman took a light hat from under her cloak, adjusted it carefully, and hastened to the street, where she found the carriage waiting.

The next moment she was riding leisurely away, with the gems in her lap.

It would not do to drive fast, for that would attract attention.

The doctor called his patients in the order of their coming.

It was fully an hour before he came to the messenger, sitting there in the office thinking of the diamonds.

In fact, the messenger was becoming impatient.

When the specialist reached him he was the only person remaining in the waiting-room.

"Well, young man, what can I do for you?" asked the doctor, stepping up to him.

The messenger looked up with an angry flush on his face.

He was annoyed at the delay.

"I came to see about the diamonds," he said.

Then the doctor remembered the woman of the day before, and her son who was going insane on the subject of diamonds.

He had no doubt the young man in question stood before him.

"Ah, yes," he said, "I know all about those diamonds."

The messenger stepped into the private office and glanced warily around.

The diamonds were not there. Neither was the woman.

"Where are they?" he asked. "Where is the woman?"

The doctor pointed to a chair.

"Sit down," he said.

"But the diamonds."

"I thought you knew about the diamonds," replied the doctor. "They were stolen."

"Stolen?"

"Of course. I thought you knew all about it."

Now what would a young messenger to whom fifty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds had been entrusted by his employers be apt to do under such a condition of affairs?

This messenger did what any other messenger would have done.

He suspected the doctor.

With a quick spring he seized the specialist by the throat.

"Give me the diamonds," he said, "and nothing shall be said about the matter. Refuse, and I'll have you in the police station in half an hour. Give me the diamonds!"

The doctor was familiar with the methods of insane men.

With one unexpected move he threw the messenger into his operating chair and bound him down with convenient straps.

"Now we'll find your diamonds," he said, placing his hand on the head of the messenger.

For an instant the messenger believed himself to be in the power of a person who had gone insane on the subject of his profession.

"You are crazy, doctor," he muttered.

The physician smiled blandly.

"They all think that," he said.

"I tell you I came here to see about the diamonds," continued the messenger.

"And I tell you," replied the doctor, "that they were stolen."

The messenger groaned.

"What will the firm say?" he muttered.

The doctor looked at the messenger with a new light in his face.

"What firm?" he asked.

The messenger mentioned the name of his firm.

"If you'll feel in my pocket," he continued, "you'll find their business card."

The doctor began to see that there had been a mistake of some sort.

He drew out the card.

"I know nothing about your diamonds," he said, releasing the messenger.

"What about them?"

"I brought them here for you to inspect."

"By whose order?"

"That of your wife."

"My wife is in Chicago," was the reply.

By this time the messenger was frantic.

He dashed into the sitting-room and ran out into the hall.

"Where is the woman who took the diamonds?" he demanded.

The doctor had seen no woman.

He half regretted releasing the messenger from the security of the operating chair.

The messenger noticed his puzzled look, and said:

"Call the police! I see it is useless to try to make you understand what has taken place. I have been robbed of fifty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds since I entered this place."

"Impossible."

"I say it is not impossible," was the excited rejoinder. "Call the police!"

The doctor did as requested, and an officer was soon in the room.

The messenger told his story.

A woman claiming to be the wife of the doctor had taken the satchel containing the stones from his hand, presumably to deliver them to her husband for inspection. That was all he knew regarding the matter.

The detective looked toward the doctor, as if for an explanation.

"I know nothing of the affair," said that gentleman.

Then he told of the appointment of the day before.

The detective repressed a smile with difficulty.

"The cutest game yet," he said, "and entirely new."

"Very clever," said the doctor.

"It will cost me my place and my reputation," said the messenger.

"It will give me a chance to make a reputation," thought the detective, making a tour of the apartments.

"Well," said the messenger, in a moment, "what is to be done?"

Then the detective came back to the private office and took out his notebook.

"What time did you get here?" he asked the messenger.

"Twelve o'clock."

"Was the woman who took the satchel from your hand the same person who ordered the diamonds sent here?"

"I did not see the woman who ordered the stones."

"Then I must go to the store to find that out."

Then the detective turned to the doctor.

"Did you see the woman to-day?" he asked.

The doctor answered in the negative.

"Then give me a description of the woman you saw yesterday."

The doctor did as requested.

"That," said the messenger, who had been listening intently, "is the description of the woman who took the satchel containing the stones from my hand."

"You may as well come to the inspector with me," said the officer.

"Not under arrest?" broke in the specialist.

"Certainly not. He will want to talk with you both before setting his men to work, and the sooner that is done the better."

"It is a very interesting case," said the doctor.

"Yes," was the reply. "I hope he'll give me charge of it. I can take Peter Martin and run the woman down in a week's time."

"Who's Peter Martin?" asked the messenger.

"One of the brightest men on the force," was the reply. "He has long been wanting a whack at a case like this one."

In a short time the three men arrived at the police station, and then the senior member of the jewelry firm was summoned to the place.

He was very suspicious at first, and finally very angry.

"You have a fine police force," he said. "Here thousands of dollars' worth of property disappears from the office of an estimable gentleman in the broad light of day."

The inspector could only advise the merchant to be patient.

"Patient," said the impulsive fellow. "How can one remain patient under such circumstances? I am not going to depend upon you to find my property," he added. "I shall employ a man of my own."

The inspector smiled.

"You will at least favor me with the name of your man," he said. "I should be pleased to meet him."

"His name is Nick Carter."

The inspector sank back in his chair with a pleased look on his keen face.

"The very man I should have suggested," he said. "If he can't find your diamonds and bring the thieves to justice there is no use of any one else trying."

"I thought I might have the case," said the detective, who had listened to the conversation with anything but pleasure.

"You may keep at work on it," was the reply, "and take Poole with you. Report every day."

"Why not take my old partner, Peter Martin?" asked the officer.

"No one knows where Martin is,"

was the reply. "He disappeared very mysteriously last night."

CHAPTER III.

NICK CARTER'S MASCOT.

From the private room of the inspector, Mr. Stocum, the senior member of the jewelry firm, went directly to the residence of the most successful detective of the century, Nick Carter.

He was fortunate in finding the great thief-taker at home, and willing to grant him an interview.

"I know Mr. Carter very well," said the merchant, addressing the messenger, who had been ordered to accompany his employer to the detective's residence, "and I have great hopes of his recovering the diamonds within a short time. Tell him all you know about the matter, but do not attempt to draw conclusions of your own."

The detective received the two men pleasantly.

He had on several occasions handled difficult undertakings for the firm of which Mr. Stocum was a member.

"It is a new scheme," he said, after the case had been explained to him, "and is the work of an expert."

"Arrest the expert and restore the diamonds," said Stocum, "and I'll give you ten thousand dollars."

Nick looked up impatiently.

"Please allow me to make my own figures," he said. "You merchants have an idea that everything in the world can be accomplished by the liberal use of money."

"And we are not far from right," was the reply.

"Then recover your diamonds through the use of money," said Nick.

"That is just what I am trying to do."

"You can't do it here! Good-day."

Nick threw himself back in his chair and picked up the paper he had been

reading when interrupted by the arrival of the merchant.

"Come, come, Mr. Carter," said the merchant. "I guess I was too commercial in my talk. Take the case, and have your own way about it. I realize that your private fortune is greater than mine, and our firm has more need of the ten thousand dollars than you have, still I presume you will not refuse to accept reasonable compensation for your work."

"Oh, I make all the money I honestly can," was the reply, "but I don't believe in the notion that good detective work can be bought in the market, just like corn cobs or hay."

The merchant laughed heartily.

"I think you are right," he said. "I guess the thieves would buy up all the talent if that were true."

"That's what they would," replied Nick. "But let us get down to work. I want a description of the woman who visited your store yesterday and arranged for the delivery of the diamonds."

This the merchant could not give, and Nick was not satisfied with that of the messenger, so the clerk who waited on Mag was sent for.

After talking with him for some moments, Nick dismissed the men and sent out after Nellie, his young lady assistant.

"I have a case with a woman in it," said Nick, as the girl made her appearance, "and I think you had better take a hand."

"What has the woman been doing?" asked Nellie.

"Stealing diamonds," was the reply.

"Tell me about it."

In a short time Nellie was in full possession of all the detective knew about the case.

"Now who did it?" she asked.

Nick glanced up with a smile.

"How should I know?" he asked. "I have not even been to the scene of the robbery."

"But you have some idea? You always seem to know where to begin."

"Certainly. Work of this kind is not done by amateurs."

"Well?"

"Where is Diamond Mag?" asked Nick, with a smile.

Nellie started.

"The very person I had in my mind," she said, "but, unfortunately for our theory, Diamond Mag is in France."

"She was in France a few weeks ago," corrected Nick.

"The work is just like her," said Nellie.

"And the description is like her," added the detective.

There was a moment's silence.

Both detectives were thinking fast.

"I don't see how we are to get the first clew, even if it is her," said Nellie, in a short time. "There is absolutely nothing to start with."

"You forget," said Nick, "that we have not yet visited the doctor's rooms."

"Let us go at once," said Nellie.

The detectives started away without loss of time, and were soon at their destination.

The doctor was just closing the place for the day, but readily admitted them.

There was very little to be learned there, and Nick soon left the place, stopping at the neighboring offices and stores on his way to his carriage.

"We shall have to begin our work among the thieves of the city," he said, as they drove away.

"What did you make out there?"

"That the woman has confederates," was the reply.

Nellie looked surprised.

"The coachman who took her to the doctor's office," said the detective, "was an old-timer, and the men who waited about the stairway for the purpose of aiding in case of emergency, were toughs of the Bowery stripe."

"I don't see how you found out that there were men waiting at the bottom of the stairs," said Nellie, "or that the coachman was an old-timer."

"Well," replied Nick, "the woman was foolish enough to ride behind the same team both days, and also foolish enough to have men of marked personal appearance with her."

"Yes."

"The alleged coachman did not know how to drive, and so attracted the attention of the merchant's clerks downstairs."

"I see"

"There was a little trouble with the horses the first day, and so the next time the team went there the salesman at the front end of the bookstore noticed them particularly."

"I wondered why you were talking with that clerk," said the girl.

"Well, the horses didn't seem to relish their new driver, and they acted badly the second day as well as the first. Only for the toughs at the foot of the stairs the driver would have been arrested for whipping the animals."

"The brute!"

For a moment, in the breast of the girl, womanly sympathy took the place of detective instinct.

"The toughs cautioned the driver," continued the detective, "and called him by name."

"What dunces!"

"Then," resumed Nick, "when the woman stepped into the carriage on the first day she was followed by a plainly-dressed man, who acted like an officer in plain clothes. He, in turn, was followed by the toughs."

"I know what you are going to say," said the girl. "The woman was watched from the moment of her landing from the vessel which conveyed her from France. The city officers are already on her track."

"You are wrong," replied Nick. "The woman would have been arrested on sight. The officer in plain clothes did not overtake the carriage, but returned to the starting place, after a short run."

"And the toughs followed him back?"

"Of course. He then asked all the people in the neighborhood about the woman. This did him no good, for no one knew anything about her. The clerks had noticed the team, not the woman."

"But the clerks saw the woman, too."

"Well, they probably did not say anything to the officer about the trouble with the team, for such things are not uncommon. The last seen of the man in plain clothes he went away with a trampish-looking chap he met in front of the bookstore."

"How do you know he was an officer?"

"Because he recognized the woman, and tried to locate her."

"And failed?"

"We don't know that. You see, the fact that he recognized her proves her to be a notorious character—probably Diamond Mag."

"The trampish-looking fellow might have been in his employ."

"In that case the driver would have been caught, for the tramp would have been on hand when he drove away. The meeting with Mag was accidental."

"Probably."

"Then," continued Nick, "when the woman made her appearance to-day, she went upstairs wearing a bonnet and came down wearing a small hat. The clerks noticed the woman to-day because of the driver and the horses, and because she had been asked about the day before."

"The hat was a slight disguise, I should say."

"It was not done for the purpose of disguise," said Nick. "She left her bonnet hanging in the waiting room in order to assure the messenger that she really belonged there. The hat was put on in

order that she might not attract attention by appearing in the street without any covering for her head."

"Good idea."

Nick took the bonnet from under his coat and handed it to his assistant.

"Observe," he said, "that one of the ribbons is secured to the body of the bonnet by a small diamond pin. That is surely the work of our old friend, Diamond Mag. See, the pin is old-fashioned, and is probably kept because of some associations connected with it."

"You are progressing famously," said Nellie.

Nick took the pin from the bonnet and placed it in his pocket.

"I will keep it for my mascot," he said. "It may have been hers."

Nellie laughed.

"You are superstitious," she said. "She would hardly have abandoned her mascot."

"She probably overlooked the fact that she had it on the bonnet," was the reply. "The trinket will come in play before we have done with the case."

"I don't understand about this officer," said the girl. "If he recognized the woman, why did he not ascertain where she had been and have the place watched? It seems she made a date for to-day."

"He failed to find out anything about her."

"But she had a date with the doctor for to-day," repeated Nellie.

"He did not question the doctor, because his office was closed for the day immediately after the departure of the woman."

"Have you a description of the officer?"

"Yes."

"Who was it?"

"Peter Martin."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Then you can find him and get a description of the men."

"That is exactly what I propose to do."

"What name did the toughs use when addressing the driver?"

"They simply called him Mose."

Nick drove to the office of the inspector of police.

"I have been expecting you," said that official, with a smile. "You have another diamond case, I understand?"

"Yes. What have you new regarding Diamond Mag?"

"She is in France."

Nick looked surprised.

"Have you no recent report regarding her?" he asked.

"No."

"I would like to see Officer Martin," said Nick.

The inspector looked annoyed.

"I don't know where he is," he said.

"Out on work?" asked Nick.

"No; he did not report this morning."

"When was he here last?"

"Yesterday afternoon."

"And he has no business to keep him away?"

"Not that I know of."

Nick glanced significantly at his assistant.

After some further talk the two detectives left the office and drove slowly uptown.

"What do you make of it?" asked Nellie, as they drove along.

"I am afraid Martin is in trouble," was the reply.

"He may be out after the diamonds," suggested Nellie.

"In that case he would report."

"The plot deepens," said Nellie, with a smile.

"Yes," said Nick. "When we find Martin, we shall find the men who watched the carriage while the woman went upstairs after the diamonds, and we can follow them to Mag."

"I hope so," replied Nellie.

"In the meantime," said Nick, "you must do a little work up at the place run by Molly Morrison."

"It's a tough place," said the girl.

"Yes, but you must get in there in some way. Diamond Mag used to hang out there, and the chances are that she is making the house her headquarters now."

"I should think she would keep away from her old associates."

"I should think so, too, but I don't think she is doing it, for the fellows who watched the doctor's stairway are thick with the people at Molly's place."

"You seem to know all about the fellows?"

"Of course I do, although I don't call their names. It is my business to know these chaps. Well, they are working with Mag now, and she probably picked them up at the house."

"Very likely. But suppose I get into trouble there?"

"One of us will be near enough to help you."

"What shall I do when I get into the house?"

"First, find out if Mag is there. Then, if she is, find out what plan she is making, and what she has done with the diamonds."

"A tough job," said the girl. "You are working the case on the theory that Mag is in the city, and that she stole the stones. You may be mistaken in one or both points."

"You'll find out that I am correct," replied Nick, with a smile, "but I am not putting all my eggs in one basket. While you are at the Morrison place I shall be looking up the toughs."

Nick drove directly home, and Nellie soon departed on her mission.

Then the detective made himself up in proper shape and went out to look through the Bowery.

He knew a great many toughs, and he

was taking his chances of hearing something from the fellows who had watched the doctor's stairway.

He had a good description of the men, and had a general notion that he ought to be able to call them by name, but he could not quite reach that.

At the corner of the Bowery and Pell street, he met Con, who knew him in the rig he wore as an amateur detective.

Con wore a new suit of clothes and looked rather happy.

"Been stealing another jack pot?" asked Nick, walking up to the fellow. "You are lookin' gay."

"Naw," said Con, scowling ferociously. "I got me fangs on a five case note an' pulled de tail out of de tiger."

"You're lucky."

"I gits me plunks," said Con, "an' goes up to play two on a side, but de queen was actin' gay, an' I tackled her, open an' shut, an' got de double cross. See?"

"Yes, I see."

"So I squats on de corner of de six an' four an' beats de end."

"Well?"

"Den I puts half a stack on de turn' an' de seven jack flashes up sixty-two an, a half. 'Dat goes,' says I, an' I plunks de long green in me kick, an' ducks me nut. See?"

Nick knew that the fellow was acquainted with most of the toughs about that part of the city, and was anxious to get him away where he could talk with him without exciting his suspicions.

"Have you seen any of the boys lately?" he carelessly asked, when the tough had concluded his story.

Con at once became suspicious.

"Who you after?" he demanded.

"No one," was the reply.

"I come near gettin' into trouble yesterday talkin' wid a fly copper," said Con.

"Who was the copper?" asked Nick. "Tell me about it."

"Martin."

Nick gave a start of surprise.

"The mascot seems to be getting in its work," he thought.

"Anything in it?" added Con, with a wink.

"Certainly."

"Den come to me room."

Con had just secured a room on Bayard street, and was rather proud of his new quarters, so he insisted on taking the detective there.

They climbed two pairs of stairs, and Con unlocked a door leading into a rear room.

It was gaudily although shabbily furnished, and Con seemed to think it about the correct thing.

"Who rooms next door?" asked Nick, standing with his hand on the half open door.

Before Con could answer a burly ruffian swaggered up to the door and forced it open.

"Wot you doin' up here?" he demanded of Con.

"I'm de proprietor here," said Con, proudly.

Nick stepped aside.

He recognized the fellow as Slippery Jim.

The next moment he knew him to be one of the men who had stood at the foot of the doctor's stairs, and who had been described to him by the clerk.

"The mascot is still on deck," thought Nick. "If this thing keeps on I shall have the diamonds before dark."

"I'm goin' ter t'ump you fer mixin' up wid dat fly copper yesterday," said Jim, flourishing a brawny fist.

"Wot fly copper?" demanded Con.

"De feller wot sent me over de road," replied Jim. "You ain't got no call ter mix up wid him."

Nick knew perfectly well who had

sent the fellow over the road the last time. It was Martin, the man he was in search of.

Jim struck out at Con, but Nick turned the blow aside.

"Let de mug alone," he said.

Then Jim struck at the detective.

Nick dodged the blow and landed on the fellow's neck, sending him to the floor like a log.

As he bent over him there was a rush of feet in the hall, and the next moment a score of evil faces crowded about the open doorway.

"It's a copper," cried a hoarse voice. "Down with him."

"Here," thought Nick, "is a case where the mascot seems to be a little off color."

He whispered to Con to keep close to his side, and made a dash for the door. He did not want the fellow to get away until he had heard his story.

Some of the men dodged away, and some went down before the muscular fists of the detective. Nick recognized one of the latter as Cracker Bob, the second tough.

Con also did good work, and the two men were soon at the head of the stairs.

Here they were met by a muscular fellow who was just ascending to his room on that floor.

Nick struck at him, missed his aim, and went headlong down the steep stairs.

The accident probably saved his life, for at that moment a pistol shot rang out and a bullet plowed its way into the wall just beyond the place recently occupied by his head.

Drawing his revolver, the detective backed downstairs and soon gained the street.

But where was Con?

The fellow had disappeared.

"It is not much of a mascot after all," thought Nick, "for there goes all hope of reaching Martin—and the diamonds—

through the men who saw him last, and who probably know where he is at the present moment."

CHAPTER IV.

JIM PREPARES A FEAST FOR THE RATS.

Nick waited in the vicinity of the stairway for a long time, but Con did not make his appearance.

"I guess the toughs are holding him," thought the detective. "The fellow may be in trouble, but it won't do for me to go there now."

When it began to grow dark he hastened to the office of the inspector of police.

"Have you heard from Martin?" he asked the inspector.

"I have not," was the reply. "It is strange what has become of the fellow."

"He has fallen into the hands of the crooks," said Nick, coolly.

The inspector started to his feet.

"I can't think that," he said.

"But it is a fact," was the reply. "He was followed yesterday by a housebreaker known as Slippery Jim. The fellow has an anchor mark on his right wrist and a scar on his left temple, and has it in for Martin."

"You must be a wizard," said the inspector.

"Nothing of the kind," was the reply. "If you watch the pawnshops for the next few days you will see Slippery Jim trying to dispose of some diamonds. Capture him, and you will be on the right road to your man Martin."

"How about your diamond case?" asked the inspector.

"It is progressing finely," was the reply.

"Slippery Jim must have had a hand in it."

"Only in a small way."

"Perhaps I had better send out and pick up this man Jim," suggested the inspector.

"If you think best to do so," replied Nick, "you will find him hanging around Bayard street."

"What do you recommend?"

"I should let him alone for a day or two."

"But I want to get hold of Martin," urged the inspector. "He may be in bad shape."

"I don't think they'll murder him," replied Nick. "However, you can do as you see fit. I thought it my duty to tell you what I knew about him."

"How did you learn all this?"

Nick laughed.

"Wait until the case is finished," he said.

Nick soon took his departure, and hastened home.

Chick was there waiting, but there was no news from Nellie.

"The girl has a tough crowd to work with," said the detective, "and I think I'll go up to Morrison's ranch after a tour in the Bowery, and see how she is getting on."

"The devil," exclaimed Chick. "How did she get into Molly Morrison's house?"

"I don't know as she did get in," replied Nick. "I sent her up there this afternoon, with instructions to get in if she could."

"You think Diamond Mag is there?"

"Yes. You know it used to be one of her resorts. You must get in there to-night if you can."

"She won't be there very long," replied Chick, "even if she is there now. She will soon be off for Europe."

"I suppose so," said Nick; "but I'll see what I can do in the way of changing her route. I have an idea she ought to travel north as far as Sing Sing."

"How shall I amuse myself in the meantime?" asked Chick. "You seem to be having all the fun in this case."

"You know Slippery Jim? The fellow who used to hang around Molly's place?"

"Yes. I see he's out again."

"Well, go down to the corner of the Bowery and Bayard street and lay for him. He may take you to Mag at Molly's place, for he was with her yesterday at the doctor's office."

Chick started away, leaving his chief putting on a fresh disguise.

Nick had posted him regarding Con and the location of his room, and he resolved to get into the place in some way.

In the meantime the man Chick was looking for was in the basement of one of the toughest saloons on the Bowery.

Before him, lying on a pile of filthy rags was the detective who had been captured the day before.

He was bound hand and foot, and the cut in his head had not been cared for, so his face was covered with congealed blood.

"Me pardner," said Jim, with an oath, "is mighty tender of you, but I'm goin' ter have me way this time."

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Martin.

Jim pointed to a heavy door separating the rear basement from that in front.

The door was set in a very heavy wall, and was well supplied with bolts and bars on the front side.

"I've rented this place fer a month," he said, "an' I'm goin' ter give the rats a free lunch!"

"Do you mean that you are going to leave me here to die of starvation?" asked Martin.

"That's about the size of it," replied Jim. "When you gits lonesome, you can think of the dungeon you sent me to; an' when you gits hungry you can think of the grub they give me for five years. It's my turn now, copper."

"Such a thing can't be done in New York," said Martin. "We are in the heart of the city, and some one will be sure to come to my relief."

"If I thought that," replied Jim, with an oath, "I'd finish you right here."

He drew a knife as he spoke, and advanced upon his helpless captive.

At that moment the door between the two basements opened, and Mose, the tough who had acted as coachman for the woman, entered.

"Wot you up to?"

He asked the question with a little quiver of terror in his voice.

The damp smell of the underground room, the dim light which filled the place with shadows, the haggard face of the wounded man, and the fierce rage depicted on the countenance of the advancing tough, all conspired to make a ghastly scene.

Slippery Jim turned hastily around as the newcomer spoke and put away his knife.

"I'm talkin' wid de bloke," he said, in reply. "Wot does yer want here?"

Mose, taking good care to keep out of sight of the wounded detective, grumbled out some reply and seemed about to leave the place.

"Did you bring them diamonds?" demanded Jim.

Mose pointed to the place where Martin lay.

"Wot diamonds?" he asked.

Jim grinned.

"You needn't mind him," he said. "He'll never tell wot he hears in this place."

"It's just as well to be careful," said Mose.

"You're mighty careful of yer diamonds," said Jim, with an ugly look on his bloated face.

"I ain't got no diamonds."

"Yer woman has. Why don't she whack?"

"I don't know."

"See here," said Jim, "you can't make a monkey wid me. If you try it on de whole t'ing goes to de police. See?"

That was just what the woman had sent Mose to find out.

Having resolved to leave the country without dividing the proceeds of the robbery with her tools, she wanted to know just what course they would pursue.

So Mose had been sent to the saloon for the express purpose of talking with one or both of the men on the subject.

"Well," said Mose, "you hain't got no holler comin' on me, an' I don't much care what you do, so long as you leave me out."

"I won't leave no one out," roared Jim. "You can fix it if you want to."

"I can't fix it for myself."

"Don't give me no guff," said Jim. "You tell Mag that me'n Bob'll give her until ter-morrow at noon to whack. If she don't do it by dat time dere'll be a whole lot of trouble fer some one that don't need to be named."

"I don't think I'll see Mag," replied Mose. "Where's Bob?"

"He got a bang in de eye," was the reply, "an' he won't be out fer a day er two."

"A bang in de eye," repeated Mose; "who done it?"

"A fly copper wot Con took up to his room," replied Jim. "He's always up to some fool trick like that, Con is."

"Where's Con now?"

Jim laughed hoarsely.

"He got a bang in both eyes," he said, "an' won't be out fer a week."

"Who done that?"

Jim raised his brawny fist and shook it under the nose of his companion.

"I did," he said, "an' you want to look sharp or you'll git de same sort of a dose. You go straight to Mag, an' tell her wot I say."

Mose sprang away and backed toward the door.

"I'll see you w'en you're in better humor," he said.

Jim followed him to the entrance of the back basement.

"You mind what I said," he growled. "Ter-morrer noon, an' not a second later."

Mose passed up the stairs and was soon on the Bowery.

"We're goin' ter have trouble wid dem ducks," he muttered, striding away in the direction of Molly Morrison's house.

When he reached the place there were few lights in sight in the windows of the great building, for it was quite late.

He did not see that Jim had hastily closed the basement door and was stealthily watching him.

After repeating a private knock on the door several times, he was admitted to the hall of the house.

"You're long enough opening up," he said, gruffly.

"We have to be careful," said a woman's voice. "Mag wants to see you right away."

Mose ascended one flight of stairs and turned into a front room.

The apartment was brilliantly lighted, and the window shades were closely drawn.

Mag sat by a table in one corner of the room.

As the tough entered she hastily concealed a steamer ticket in a convenient drawer. She was ready to leave for France—alone!

"Did you find them?" she asked, turning a slightly agitated face toward her confederate.

"I found Jim," was the reply.

"Well?"

"He's makin' a great beef about de diamonds."

Mag eyed the fellow for some time without replying.

"And to think," she mused, "that I ever seriously considered taking a brute like that to Paris!"

Having used the ruffians of the Bowery,

she was now anxious to be rid of them.

"How does he talk?" she finally asked.

"He's ugly," was the reply, "an' talks police."

In a few words the tough explained where he had discovered Jim, and exactly what had been said.

The woman arose and walked up and down the floor for some moments before venturing a reply.

"I guess he'll do fer de copper," added Mose.

"I hope he will," was the reply, "and I hope the officers will catch him at it."

"He's got it in fer de copper," said Mose.

"Where's Bob? Is he making trouble, too?"

Mose explained what had happened to Bob.

Just then the couple heard a noise in the hall, and Mag stepped to the door and opened it.

The landlady stood there with an angry, flushed face.

"What's the matter?" asked Mag.

"Oh, I hired a new dining-room girl this afternoon," was the reply, "and she's making me no end of trouble."

"Trouble? How?"

Mag was evidently suspicious.

"Why," was the reply, "I sent her up to bed half an hour ago, and just found her prowling around the halls."

Mag drew the woman into the room and closed the door.

"What do you mean by prowling around the halls?" she demanded.

"She couldn't find her room."

Mose sprang forward and began to curse vigorously.

"You've let some sneak inter de house," he said.

"See here," said the woman. "I want no Bowery manners here. If you don't like my style you may go back to your free lunches."

Mose, now trembling with passion, seemed about to strike the woman, but Mag restrained him.

"I know you Bowery toughs," said the landlady, coolly. "You have the stink of the prize ring about you. You can't even keep your hands off your own chums."

"What do you mean?" asked Mag.

"Why," replied the landlady, "Bob came here a little while ago all bruised and bleeding from blows dealt by that brute of a Jim."

"Bob!" echoed the woman, "you didn't let him in, did you?"

"Of course I let him in," said the landlady. "Do you think I want him going about the streets in that way? He might bring the police to this place."

"And Bob is threatening me," said Mag. "I wonder you didn't let me know what was going on."

"I let him in on your account," was the reply. "You seem to change companions mighty suddenly."

Mag saw she had gone too far, and added that Bob was only impatient about the division of some property.

"Well," said the landlady, "he'll have to stay here through the night now, but I can fix him up and send him away in the morning."

This seemed to satisfy the two plotters, and the landlady soon left the room.

"What's to be done now?"

Mag asked the question as soon as the door closed behind the woman of the house.

"The devil only knows," was the brutal reply.

"I don't like the idea of that new servant prowling around the house," said the woman, "and I don't see what she let Bob in for."

"De girl is a detective," said Mose, "an' Bob is here to keep cases on you an' de diamonds."

The woman sat down and leaned her head on her hand.

She had something to say to the tough, but she could not make up her mind how to say it.

"What sort of a place is that basement?" she finally asked.

"Tough," was the reply. "A man couldn't live there long."

"Could you get Jim and Bob down there to make the settlement?"

Mose threw a keen glance at the woman.

"I know wot you want," he said. "You want 'em left dere."

"They would make us no more trouble," suggested the woman.

There was a movement at the door, and Mose hastened to open it.

The new dining-room girl stood there, a look of terror on her face.

"Wot now?" demanded Mose.

"Im afraid," was the reply. "There's someone in my room."

"I'll give you a room big enough fer just one, if I catch you here again to-night," said Mose, savagely.

The girl made some reply in French.

Mag hastened to the door.

"I want an English girl who speaks French," she thought. "Perhaps this one will do."

"Go back to your room," she said, kindly, with a view of having a more extended talk with the girl later on. "No one will harm you in this house."

The girl turned away, and Mag closed the door.

"That was a close call," thought Nellie, stopping for a moment in the hall. "I wonder where Chick is? Nick was to have him here."

Proceeding down the hall, Nellie stopped and listened at several doors, but the rooms seemed to be empty. The hall was very quiet.

At last she heard a faint signal.

"Chick!"

The girl almost said the word aloud.

In a moment the signal was repeated.

Then Nellie answered, and in a second a door was opened.

"I heard your voice," whispered Chick. "Step in here."

The detective was dressed like a tough, and both eyes seemed to be in mourning.

There were spots of blood on his face.

"What has happened?" whispered Nellie.

"I'm Bob," whispered Chick. "That is the only way I could get in the house."

"Where's the real Bob?"

"In a safe place. I've got his clothes on. What have you learned?"

"The woman is here, and the diamonds are here. Mag is plotting to murder Jim and Bob and escape to France alone. Nick's mascot works."

"Have you seen Nick?" asked Chick.

"No; where is he?"

"He was to take a turn in the Bowery and come here. He will be surprised to find me here first, but that is all luck. I couldn't find Jim, so I took the other fellow's clothes and came along."

"Nick will be here before morning," said Nellie.

CHAPTER V.

TREACHERY AMONG THIEVES.

Nick did not reach the Morrison place until quite late.

Waiting in the street outside, he saw Nellie's face at the parlor window, but did not succeed in attracting her attention.

Then, after a short time, he saw a person he believed to be Cracker Bob enter the place.

Chick was well disguised, and in the darkness his chief did not recognize him.

"The fellow has gone to get his share of the gems," thought the detective. "I wonder how I am to get in? I presume I'll have to burglarize the house."

There was no doubt now in the mind

of the detective that Mag was in the place.

"But that does me no good," he thought, "if I can't get to the gay old girl. I suppose I'll have to pick that lock. Chick must be due here before long."

Nick had no idea that Slippery Jim was lurking around the house.

He had an idea that Chick was paying special attention to that gentleman about that time.

He was also ignorant of the fact that the diamond thieves were about ready to cut each other's throats.

Presently, when all was quiet in the house, Nick crept up the steps and inserted his skeleton key in the lock.

The bolt did not move readily, and Nick bent over to see what sort of a lock he had to deal with.

"Wot you doin' here?"

Nick looked up to see Slippery Jim standing by his side.

"I'm workin' fer me livin'," replied the detective. "Wot do you mean by interruptin' a honest man as is earnin' his daily bread?"

"I'm on dat lay meself," said Jim.

"Workin' dis?"

Nick pointed toward the house as he spoke.

"Yes."

"Do you know where dey be?"

"Wot yer talkin' about?"

"Diamonds."

"Whose diamonds?"

"Mine, if I gits me hands on 'em," was the reply.

"You don't know what yer gassin' about," said Jim, inclined to be ugly at the appearance of the pretended burglar.

"I'm talkin' about diamonds," replied Nick.

Jim paused to give an extra sailor-like hitch to his trousers, and then said, gruffly:

"Who put you onto de diamonds?"

"Never you mind who put me on," was the reply. "De diamonds is in dere all right. Mag's got 'em, an' Mag's in dere."

"Well," said Jim, "I know w'ere Mag's room is. Can you go in an' git 'em if I show you were it is?"

Jim's idea was to have the seeming burglar get the diamonds and then relieve him of them, even if he had to kill him.

Nick hesitated.

He knew that Mose was in the house, probably watching the stones.

He also believed Bob to be in the place.

He did not know what the toughs might do when he was once in the house, for he was not aware of the ill-feeling between the thieves.

It might be Jim would arouse the gang and attack him, in which case he would stand very little show, with only Nellie to aid him, in the desperate fight which was sure to follow.

"Chick ought to be in the neighborhood," he thought, "and I guess I'd better risk it."

"Yes," he said, turning toward Jim, "I can git 'em, but, if you knows where dey be, w'y don't you get 'em yerself?"

"Dey knows me in de house," said Jim, "and, besides, wot do I want to whack wid you fer if I do all de work?"

"Well," said Nick, resolving that the fellow should not get far beyond the range of his pistol, "you show de way an' I'll make de sneak."

The two men approached the house again, and Nick soon had his key in the lock once more. His idea was to arrest Jim as soon as he secured the gems.

The bolt turned, and the door opened without noise.

"You're a clever bloke," whispered Jim. "Now go up one pair of stairs an' turn into de front room on de left. Mag sleeps dere, an' de diamonds is wid her."

"The mascot shall be framed in gems,"

thought Nick. "Here is one of the thieves leading me to the place where another thief has hidden the stolen property!"

"You come up wid me," whispered Nick.

"Naw; I stay here an' watch an' keep de door open."

Nick saw that it was useless to argue the matter, and so passed on up stairs.

When he reached the landing he saw that the hall was dark and deserted.

He had no difficulty in finding the door of the woman's room.

To his surprise, he found it unlocked.

He pushed the door open, and the faint odor of chloroform came to his nostrils.

Then he heard a movement in the room.

It was by no means a stealthy movement, but sounded like the heavy struggling of a person in pain.

He advanced in the direction from which the sound proceeded.

At that instant, just as he left his position by the door, there was another movement, and the door was softly closed.

Nick pushed back the slide of his dark lantern, and a shaft of light swept around the room.

At that instant a signal which he at once recognized came from the other side of the door.

Much to the surprise of the detective, it was not Nellie's signal, but Chick's.

He gave a low response, and advanced toward the struggling figure of a man lying on the carpeted floor.

The man was Mose!

There was a terrible cut on his head, and his hands were tied. A strong cord had been tied tightly about his neck.

In a few moments more he would have died from suffocation.

Nick cut the cord about the fellow's throat and turned toward the door.

It opened as he reached it, and Chick, still disguised as Bob, entered. Only for

the signal previously given, Nick would not have recognized his assistant.

Glancing hastily around the room, Chick asked:

"Where's Nellie?"

"I haven't seen her," was the reply.

Chick looked dumbfounded.

"She started for this room a moment ago," he said, "and I thought I heard her leave it, but she is not at the place of meeting."

"Someone did leave here a moment ago," said Nick. "It might have been her."

"No; she would have gone straight to the place where I waited for her," said Chick.

Nick pointed to the figure on the floor.

"What is he doing here?" he asked.

"He must have come in after the diamonds," replied Chick.

"That's it," said Nick. "See, everything in the room has been overhauled."

This was indeed the case. The apartment looked as if a cyclone had swept through it.

Then Nick pointed to the empty bed.

"Whose bed is that?" he asked.

"Mag's."

At that instant a shot echoed through the hall, followed by a perfect volley of oaths and groans.

Then the front door opened and closed with a bang.

The next moment a carriage drove rapidly away.

The people of the house had been alarmed by the noises, and voices were now heard outside.

Chick pointed toward a closet opening from the room.

"Get in there," he said to Nick. "We may want to stay in the house to-night. They won't mind me."

Nick thought this very good advice and acted upon it at once.

He was hardly out of sight when the

door of the room was thrown open, and the landlady bounded in.

"What's going on here?" she shouted. "Where's Mag?"

Chick pointed to the empty bed.

"She's gone," he said. "What's all that noise downstairs?"

The woman saw the wounded man on the floor and bent over him, making no reply.

"Who did this?" she demanded, in a moment.

Chick shook his head.

"Who fired that shot?" he asked.

The woman turned fiercely on the seeming Bob.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"I might ask the same of you," replied Chick. "I heard a noise here and came in."

"There is some mystery about all this," said the woman. "You have not been in bed."

"I did not undress," replied Chick, "because I was afraid Jim would come here. I don't want another thumpin' to-night."

The woman opened the door and started downstairs.

"You needn't be afraid of Jim," she said. "He will never beat you again."

Chick followed her to the foot of the stairs.

Slippery Jim lay there dead, with a bullet wound in his breast.

Then a loud knocking was heard on the outer door.

"The officers is comin'," said Chick. "I'm goin' up to me room."

The woman made no objection, and Chick went off up stairs.

He stopped for a moment in Mag's room and motioned to Nick to follow him, and the two detectives were soon in the apartment which had been assigned to the seeming Bob.

In a short time the officers who were

searching the house, appeared at their door.

One of the men knew Nick, and they soon went away, after being told whatever the detective thought it proper for them to know.

"Now," said Chick, when the detectives were alone again, "what do you make out of all this?"

"What were Mag and Mose doing?" asked Nick.

"Plotting to kill Jim and Bob and get away with the diamonds," was the reply.

"Then it is all easy enough," said Nick.

"Well?"

"Mose became suspicious of Mag and tried to steal the stones."

"It looks that way."

"Mag had previously made arrangements to leave the house during the night, and so shake the whole crowd."

"Yes; and had a carriage ready," said Chick.

"When Mose went into her room, she remained quiet, knowing he could not find the diamonds, but when he tried to drug her she gave him a crack on the head."

"Yes."

"Then Mag took the diamonds and got out."

"Thus proving your mascot to be of no account," laughed Chick.

"Never mind the mascot now," said Nick. "It will come out all right before the case is finished."

"Perhaps it can tell you what took place after she left the room," said Chick.

"Of course. At the foot of the stairs she found him."

"Well?"

"He tried to prevent her flight, and she shot Jim."

"How did Jim get there?"

"He came in with me. We were to

burglarize the house and get the diamonds."

Chick looked surprised, but said nothing.

"And now," concluded Nick, "where's Nellie?"

"I don't know," replied Chick. "It seems we have lost the stones, and it may be that we have lost our assistant."

Just then the sound of many feet in the hall attracted the attention of the officers, and Chick opened the door.

The policemen who had searched the house were standing just outside.

"What is it?" asked Chick.

"Did you pinch the wounded man?" asked the officer in charge of the squad.

"No; we left that for you to do."

"Then he's escaped."

"That's bad," said Nick. "We wanted him."

The officers went back downstairs, and Nick turned to his assistant.

"We may as well get out," he said.

"But what about Nellie?"

"She is not here."

"How do you know that?"

"She would have shown herself when the officers came."

"I guess you're right."

The detectives passed the officers in the hall below, and left the house.

The body of Jim was taken to the morgue, and all was again still in the house. Molly glared at Nick as he went out. She had not seen him before that night.

"Were you with Nellie most of the time?" asked Nick, after they were on the street.

"No; she was skipping about the house."

"Did she talk with the woman?"

"Yes."

"More than once?"

"Yes; but I did not hear what they said."

"Where was Mose when they were talking?"

"Nellie went back to the room after Mose left it."

"Did she tell you what took place there at that time?"

"She did not have time. When she came back to me there was someone in the hall, and we could not talk until just before she started for the room to try and get the diamonds."

"And so," said Nick, with a laugh, "there were three people trying to steal the diamonds to-night, and Mag got away with them all?"

"It looks that way."

"Well," said Nick, "when we find Mag again we shall find Nellie."

"You think she went away with her?"

"Certainly."

"Why should she do that?"

"Because she saw that she could not stop her going, and did not want to lose sight of her."

"The woman may have asked her to go," said Chick. "Nellie told me that Mag seemed to be stuck on her, and talked to her in French."

Nick stopped in the street and looked at Chick in amazement.

"That accounts for it," he said. "Why didn't you mention that before?"

CHAPTER VI.

BOB "DUCKED HIS NUT."

"It strikes me," said Chick, after the detectives had seated themselves in their private room at Nick's residence, "that it would be the correct thing to watch all foreign-bound vessels and all railway stations."

"That's where you are off," replied Nick.

"Off? Why?"

"Because the woman will remain in the city until things quiet down a little. She knows very well she could be arrest-

ed on the other side if she left the country, and that she could be readily traced from any depot in the city."

"What a detective the woman would have made," said Chick.

"Yes," was the reply, "she would have made a hit in our line. She knows the city thoroughly, and is up to all sorts of tricks."

"She has one fault, though," said the assistant. "She takes too many people into her schemes."

"That's the very fault that will down her in this case," replied Nick. "Only for the men she left at the foot of the doctor's stairs we should never have got track of her."

"You forget your mascot," laughed Chick.

"Don't worry about the mascot," replied Nick. "It will come in play before long."

"I wish Nellie would show up," said Chick.

"Well," replied Nick, "we'll leave the case in her hands to-night, and go to bed. Where did you leave Cracker Bob when you robbed him of his clothes?"

"In one of our rooms on Grand street. He would be only too glad to have the woman pinched."

"Are you sure he can't get away? We want him as a witness. Jim is past all human courts."

"Oh, he's all right," replied Chick. "I left a man with him."

"You found him in Con's room, eh?"

"Yes; and Con and the fellow were swearing vengeance on the whole gang."

"How did you get in?"

"I had no trouble," was the reply. "The toughs had gone away, and Con and Bob were nursing their wounds. I knew I could get into Molly's place by personating Bob, and so did not try to find Jim."

"Molly will have trouble squaring her-

self with the police now," said Nick. "We left her house in bad shape."

"I hope they'll raid the ranch," replied Chick. "It is nothing but a den of thieves."

"I hope they won't," said Nick. "We want just such places. They make excellent traps."

The weary detectives soon went to bed and slept soundly until morning, Chick remaining at the home of his chief in order to be ready for work early the next day.

When Nick went down to the breakfast room the next morning he saw Nellie sitting there reading the paper.

"Did you bring your friend along with you?" asked Nick.

"Hardly," replied the girl, with a laugh. "She seemed to weary of my company."

"You left the house with her, of course?"

"Yes. She wanted me to go to France with her, and I consented."

"When was the arrangement made?"

"After she had done for Mose, and I saw that it would be dangerous for Chick and myself to attempt to arrest her in that den of thieves."

"Who was it that left her room just after the lights were turned out?" asked Nick.

"It was I. I entered the room the second time just after she struck Mose."

"And you got down stairs just in time to see her shoot Jim? Is that it?"

"Yes. How do you know so much about it?"

"I was there. If you had given the signal we could have ended the case then and there."

"Well," said the girl, "it wasn't safe to give the signal. She was not far away, and would have suspected something. Besides, I thought Chick would rush into the room and receive a bullet for his pains."

"You worked it nicely," said Nick. "Where did the woman leave you last night?"

"There's where I made a mistake," replied the girl. "I tried to send word out to you, and she caught me at it—caught me dropping a note to an officer."

"It's a wonder she didn't kill you."

"She tried to, but I got away by making a quick jump from the carriage and rushing up to a patrolman."

"But she talked with you before this took place?"

"Yes."

"What did she say about her plans?"

"She intends remaining in the city until things quiet down."

"I thought so," said Nick. "Of course you don't know where she will stay?"

"No; she will play the workingwoman racket, and keep out of sight in that way."

Nick went to his desk and examined the contents of a drawer marked "D."

"Mag used to be in the pie and cake business before she turned thief," he said, closing the drawer. "We may want a good many pies and cakes during the next few days."

"We never can go through all the pie and cake places in New York," said Nellie.

"That is very true," replied Nick. "We'll have to find some other way to get at her. She took the diamonds away with her, of course?"

"Yes, and she will keep them with her."

"But not on her person," said Nick, decidedly.

"Why not? She had them on her person last night."

"That is all very well," was the reply, "but she did not know then that she was suspected of the robbery."

"Well, she knows now."

"Yes, and will hide the diamonds so

the officers cannot find them, even if she is arrested."

"I suppose so."

"She knows that, if caught, she will have to serve a term for the robbery, and fifty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds would come in handy at the end of her imprisonment."

"You forget the murder of Jim."

"You are right. I have my head so full of diamonds that I forgot the greater crime. Well, she will keep the diamonds for her lawyer."

"And so there is danger of getting the woman without recovering the diamonds?"

"That is the real danger of the case now."

"It is unfortunate," said Nellie, "that all the woman's confederates are out of the way. Otherwise we might get track of her by following them."

"You forget Mose," replied Nick.

"She will have nothing to do with him now," said Nellie. "She will be sure and keep out of his way."

"Right you are," replied Nick. "Therefore we must look for her in places not frequented by thieves."

"And that makes it all the harder."

"I don't know about that," said Nick.

"And there is Bob," suggested Nellie.

"We can at least find Martin by using him," rejoined the detective.

"Then you'd better be doing it," said Nellie. "I heard Mose talk about his being locked up in some basement."

"He may be getting hungry," replied Nick, "and I think I'll go and see about it."

"You'd better leave me something to do," said the girl.

Nick sat down at his desk and wrote out the following advertisement:

"FOUND—Among the wearing apparel left in the office of a well-known doctor, an article ornamented with a valuable diamond. The owner may recover

the same by proving property and paying a suitable reward."

"Now," he said, after reading the notice aloud, "where shall we have the woman call?"

"Why," said Nellie, "are you advertising your mascot?"

"Certainly."

"Do you think Mag will be fool enough to call for it?"

"She will be smart enough to call for it, or, rather, to send some one for it."

"She has plenty of diamonds without that."

"Yes, but she will get the bonnet and the diamond if she can, partly because of the value and associations of the latter, and partly because she would like to place an important clew beyond the reach of the police."

Nellie still looked doubtful.

"Hundreds of articles are carelessly left in public offices every year," added Nick; "the woman will think the officers overlooked her bonnet, and that it was placed with a number of unclaimed articles, and so sold and advertised by the purchaser."

"You are always right," said the girl. "Now, where can we have her messenger call?"

"I've been thinking of the old lady on Sixth street," said Nick. "You can go there and watch, for it won't do for you to meet any person who calls. Mag had too good a look at you for that."

"But I was disguised."

"That makes no difference. We are dealing with a very cunning person."

"Well, put the notice in the Herald, and I'll be at the place early in the morning."

"And tell the woman not to give the diamond to any person who calls. Make a note of the appearance and characteristics of each one, and bring the whole to me to-morrow night. Make dates for the afternoon."

Having settled this part of the business

satisfactorily, Nick departed in the direction of Grand street.

"I'll go and see Bob," he thought, "and find out where Martin is."

When he reached the room on Grand street it was empty.

He was about to summon the landlord, who knew what Nick's business was, and frequently received liberal pay from him, when a step on the stairs attracted his attention.

The next moment the door opened, and Con entered.

That worthy gazed about the apartment with a look of surprise on his bruised face.

"Say, pard," he said, in a moment, "what's de layout now?"

"Were you here last night?" asked Nick.

"Yep."

"Where are the two men who were here then?"

"Ask me suthin' easy."

"One of the men," said Nick, "was a prisoner; where is he, and where is the man left to watch him?"

"Bob ducked his nut. See?"

"When?"

"Early dis mornin'. You see I comes up here dis mornin' an' sees de copper lookin' like a feller what was holdin' deuces in a big game, an' I offered to go him a stack de bloke had give him de double cross. He said I'd called de turn, but banked on havin' him back in front of de game in an hour. See?"

"And so Bob got away?"

"Dat's it. I comes up to see if he'd got him back."

"Well, he hasn't got him back."

Nick was very much disgusted.

The life of Detective Martin might depend upon finding Bob, and it was now doubtful about being able to do that.

"I guess the mascot is no good," he thought. "If I don't catch the woman with it, I'll throw it away."

Con went away, and Nick sat down in the room to wait for the landlord, who had been sent for.

As he sat there, busy with his notebook, the door of a rear room was softly opened, and Bob crept cautiously into the apartment.

He held a wicked-looking knife in his hand.

"I thought he'd come here," he thought.

Nick heard a noise behind his back, and sprang to his feet just in time to avoid a savage thrust with the knife.

Quick as a flash Bob turned and made for the door, with the detective in close pursuit.

Bob closed the door behind him and Nick heard the snap of a nightlock. Before he could open the door, the would-be murderer was out of sight in the crowded street below.

"Chick was mistaken in the fellow," thought Nick, walking away from the place. "I wonder what it all means."

For a moment the detective was sorry he had not detained Con.

While he pondered over the matter Chick made his appearance, walking very fast in the direction of the place Nick had just left.

"Did you find them there?" he asked.

"Bob has escaped," replied Nick. "I thought you had the fellow in a condition of mind where he would tell all he knew about the woman and about Martin?"

"I don't understand it," said Chick.

"He was all right last night when I left him. Seen anything of Ben, the man I left to guard him?"

"No; but I just saw Bob, and he tried the knife racket and got away."

"Well, how do you size it up?" asked the assisant.

"Bob has either seen Mag since her escape with the diamonds, or has received a message from her. At any rate, she knows, through Bob, who is after her. I

wonder at Bob's gall in going back to the room."

"And she put him up to this assault upon you?"

"Of course, and it all means that we must play a quiet game from now on. She will have us watched."

"Then, of course, she knows that it was not Bob who got into Molly Morrison's house last night?"

"Certainly."

"Well," said Chick, "how are we going to help Martin now?"

"That is more than I know. I'm afraid the police will never find him. He's in hard luck."

"We've got to hustle," replied Chick, "or he will be murdered."

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT THE MASCOT ACCOMPLISHED.

During the next twenty-four hours the two detectives visited, in various disguises, dozens of places where men of the Bob and Mose stripe hung out, but nothing was seen or heard of the two toughs.

"There's only one string left," said Nick, at noon on the following day, as he started home for the purpose of hearing Nellie's report. "If that don't pan out, I shall think the mascot a hoodoo."

"And that is the advertisement?" asked Chick.

"Exactly."

"I have very little faith in it."

"Well," said Nick, "I can't believe I have lost my head just yet. I shall have a great run of luck in the case yet."

Nellie was waiting at the house when the detectives arrived.

"How many callers have you had?" asked Nick.

"About twenty," was the reply, "and every one of them was certain the diamond belonged to them."

"And some offered large rewards?"

"Oh, yes."

"Did you discover the person we want?"

"I think so."

"Ah," said Nick, "the mascot begins to get in its work."

"The very first person who came," said Nellie, "was a man whom I believe to be Mose."

"Of course he did not see you?"

"No; the woman of the house talked with him."

"What did he say?"

"He described the diamond, and said that it had been carelessly stuck in a bonnet hanging on the wall in Doctor Speed's office."

"That's good."

"He said the owner of the diamond was a lady, and that she mistook another bonnet for her own. She told him to have the woman call in person this afternoon."

"That's right. What did he say to that?"

"He said the woman was out of town, but he would try and reach her by telegraph."

"That settles the case," said Nick. "Who said the mascot was no good?"

"But," said Chick, "the case is not complete until you get the gems as well as the thief. How are you going to get them if you arrest the woman when she calls this afternoon, as I have no doubt she will?"

"I never thought of arresting Mag at the Sixth street house," replied the detective.

"Oh."

"I shall follow her to her hang-out and watch the place. You must remember that we want Mose and Bob, and want to do a good turn for the police department by releasing Martin."

At one o'clock the two detectives were snugly hidden in a room on Sixth street from which they could see and hear all that took place in the room where the woman was to call for her diamond.

At two o'clock the door opened, and a portly woman with blue glasses and a very red face entered.

She was cheaply dressed, and her garments were plentifully sprinkled with flour.

"I keep a little bake shop down here on Third avenue," she said, "and just had time to run over without changing my clothes. Have you the diamond here?"

Nick crept to the window and looked out on the street.

Both Bob and Mose were standing only a few doors away.

"Never doubt my mascot again," said the detective, with a laugh. "Mag's bodyguard stands below."

"I wonder how she squared it with the fellows?" asked Chick.

"We'll find that out later on. The woman is made up well, isn't she?"

"Rather."

"I hope you're satisfied the diamond belongs to me," said the disguised Mag. "I wouldn't lose it for the world."

"There is another person who tells a pretty straight story," said the woman of the house. "She will be here this afternoon, and if I do not give it to her you shall have it."

"If you give it to her," said Mag, "I'll have the law of you."

"Where is your place of business?" asked the woman, ignoring the threat. "If I think it belongs to you I'll send it down as soon as my son comes home."

"Who else claims it?" asked Mag.

"The woman in whose bonnet it was found," replied the other.

Mag started.

"She is an impostor," she said. "If you don't send the stone to me I'll make you trouble."

She flounced out of the room as she spoke, and the two detectives were not slow in getting out of their quarters so as to follow her.

"Say," whispered Nick to the woman of the house, "she didn't give her address. Ask her for it. She is suspicious, and won't come again."

The woman stepped to the head of the stairs and called out to Mag.

"Give me your address, please."

"I'll call again."

"That won't do," said the woman. "I want to know who you are."

Mag reluctantly gave a number on Third avenue and hurried away.

Nick and Chick were not long in getting to the street.

Mose and Bob, who were not far away, never suspected that the two young dudes were the very men they were there to watch for.

Mag turned into a bakery lunch room at the number given, and the detectives walked on down the street.

Mose and Bob soon disappeared.

They had followed Mag into the store.

"Now," said Nick, "we'll wait until they go away and follow them."

"What for?"

"We want them, don't we?"

"Yes, but we want the woman first."

"There is where you are mistaken," said Nick. "We want the men first, because they would learn of the arrest of Mag, she being at a place certain, while she will never know where they are until she is under lock and key."

"You are right."

"And then," added Nick, "they may go to the place where Martin is confined."

"I see you are still reckoning on your mascot," laughed Chick.

"I have good reason to," was the reply. "First, I located Mag by guesswork, then I met Con accidentally, and he took me to Jim and Bob. Then Mag bit at a fool advertisement which was really a flimsy bait, and now we are going to find Martin."

"Hold on," said Chick. "You state but one side of the case. You find Con

only to have him escape. You meet Bob and Jim only to have one of them get away and attempt your life, while the other has the bad taste to get killed without saying a word to help you out. Then, when you find Mag, she runs away and takes the diamonds with her."

"But we have found her again."

"Yes, but only after she has had plenty of time to bury the stones beyond all hopes of recovery."

"Never mind," replied Nick. "It will come out all right."

As Nick spoke, Bob and Mose walked out of the bakeshop and turned south.

The detectives followed on and saw them enter a saloon some distance down the Bowery.

Before going into the saloon the detectives turned into a convenient place and shifted their disguises.

A moment later two workingmen with bushy beards walked into the saloon and sat down at a table near a partition.

As they did so, the proprietor of the place passed through a door in the partition, carrying two glasses of whiskey in his hands.

"Look here," the detective heard him say, "where's the feller that rented my back basement?"

"Dead," said Mose.

"He didn't pay the rent," said the saloon-keeper, "an' he went off leavin' a sick man down there. And, besides bein' sick, the man he left is crazy, an' has to be tied. He thinks he's a great detective."

Mose laughed, and said that was one on the house.

"I've been feedin' the feller," continued the saloonkeeper, "an' some one's got to foot the bill."

"Take the bill with you when you pass in your chips," said Bob.

"Well," said the saloonkeeper, "I'll go right now an' turn the crazy man loose."

"Wait," said Bob. "Let us see him first."

The detectives heard the men leave their seats and start along a passage to the basement stairs.

When they heard their feet on the steps they followed on after them.

They saw the three men enter the

basement and pass through the doorway to the rear room.

One hasty glance satisfied Nick that there was no other exit from the foul place.

Quick as a flash he closed the heavy door and locked and barred it.

"What next?" asked Chick.

"Go upstairs and call in a couple of policemen. Leave one in the saloon to prevent a crowd of toughs gathering there, and send the other down here. Be quick about it."

The men in the basement were already swearing and pounding on the door.

When the policemen arrived it took but a moment to explain matters to them, and then the detectives left the place.

Nick stopped long enough in the saloon to write and send the following note:

"Inspector of Police: You will find your man Martin at No. — Bowery, in a basement, with two officers watching him and three men who are responsible for his condition. Act at once, for it is a tough place. Yours,

N. C."

"Ain't you going to wait?" asked Chick.

"We must not lose a second's time in arresting the woman," replied Nick. "She may have had these fellows watched. You know she suspects them both."

"I see," said Chick. "That is the reason why you depart from your usual course, and allow your men to be arrested by the police."

"That's it," said Nick.

The detectives were soon back at the bakeshop.

The woman behind the counter was not the person they sought.

"Where is the lady who lost the diamond?" asked Nick.

The woman started and turned pale.

"She's gone away," she said.

At that moment a voice was heard in the kitchen.

"Not gone yet, but going," said the voice of Mag. "I'll be out in a moment."

She had been inspecting the detectives through a peek-hole, and had not recognized them in their disguises.

"Be careful now," whispered Nick.

"Remember we want the gems as well as the woman."

In a moment Mag made her appearance.

"Now," whispered Nick, "watch her when the arrest is made."

As she faced Chick, Nick moved toward the back end of the room, as if to examine something in the show case.

Then he stepped softly up behind her, and almost before she knew what had happened, the handcuffs were on her wrists.

"What does this mean?" she demanded.

"It means," replied Chick, "that you are under arrest for the diamond robbery, and also for the murder of your pal, Jim."

"You'll have to prove it," said the woman, in a rage.

Nick looked at his assistant inquiringly.

Chick pointed to a refrigerator in one corner of the room.

"The diamonds are there, are they?" asked the detective, with a smile. "Well, we'll see if we can find them."

But they were nowhere to be found.

The refrigerator was torn to pieces, but the gems did not appear.

The woman stood looking on with a scornful smile on her face.

"You won't find anything there," she said.

Chick turned away in disgust.

"I guess we are up a stump," he said.

Everything had been searched but several large rolls of butter.

As Nick put his hand on one of these Mag gave a quick start.

"The diamonds are there," said Nick.

And there they were, snugly concealed in a huge roll of fresh butter.

"There," said Nick, "the case is ended."

"And the mascot has vindicated itself," said Chick.

The woman was taken to the police station, where the detectives met the inspector, earnestly talking with the rescued detective.

Bob and Mose had been arrested without difficulty, and Mose had confessed the whole thing.

"Now," said Nick, turning to Bob,

"what inducements did the woman offer you two men to go back into her service after you were satisfied of her treachery?"

"Half the diamonds," answered Mose, sullenly.

"And you would never have seen one of them," hissed the woman.

"I'd like to know what you took my clothes for when you went to Molly's house?" demanded Bob of Chick.

"So I could get in, of course."

"Wot did you say Jim hit you fer?" was the next question.

"So the woman would keep Jim and the supposed Bob apart that night if Jim happened to come there."

"It was a dirty trick," growled Bob.

"How did you get away?" asked Nick.

"I thought you would stay in the place where Chick put you."

"I bought up your man," said Bob.

"I wish I had killed you wid dat knife."

"Well, the case is ended," said the inspector, who had been listening to Martin's story. "And if Peter here had reported what he knew about Mag being in the city instead of trying to capture her himself, it would have saved him a lot of trouble."

Molly Morrison's place was raided that night and broken up.

Bob and Mose served long terms for their part in the robbery, and Diamond Mag was sentenced to death for the murder of Slippery Jim.

Nick always kept the diamond pin for a mascot, as he said, "it brought him a great run of luck."

"It was the easiest case I ever had," he said to the inspector of police, as he shook hands with that official and turned toward home.

Con is still about the city, now wearing diamonds and now "skatin' on his uppers."

The saloonkeeper, who knew all about the identity of the man in his basement, received a short term for aiding in an abduction.

And so the case closed.

[THE END.]

The next number of the Nick Carter Weekly will contain "Roxy's Signal in the Sky; or, A Gold Bug Worth a Fortune," by the Author of Nick Carter.

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